

21st Century Library Needs Assessment

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**YOUNG
BURNINGHAM
BAYER
CARLTON
JONES**

UTAH STATE LIBRARY DIVISION

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Utah State Library Division
Amy Owen, Division Director
250 North 1950 West, Suite A
Salt Lake City, Utah 84116-7901

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THE 21ST CENTURY CHALLENGE

As Utah enters the 21st century, its public libraries face a range of challenges, including the requirements of information technology, rapid population growth, and aging infrastructure. This study results from a series of efforts to define, plan for, and help communities meet those needs.

Two years ago, the State Library Division selected a team led by Kimball L. Young, Jason Burningham, Laura Bayer, Blaine Carlton, and Dan Jones to conduct this study. The team, coordinated by Kimball L. Young, had four specific tasks:

- ❖ To analyze demographic data, library use patterns, and projected demand for the next ten years (Jason Burningham).
- ❖ To conduct a statewide public opinion survey to determine the residents' knowledge of, and support for, Utah's public libraries (Dan Jones).
- ❖ To review the extent and condition of the state's existing public library buildings and the anticipated facilities needs over the next ten years (Laura Bayer).
- ❖ To study governance and funding options that might assist libraries in meeting those needs (Blaine Carlton).

Because of the extent of data involved, the 21st Century Library Needs Assessment report takes a variety of forms. This document provides a brief overview of the study team's findings and recommendations. A series of brief technical summaries offers an overview of facilities data based on the size of library service populations. A general summary report gives a more detailed review. Each participating library has received a broadsheet summary to share with its patrons. And finally, extensive technical reports and supplemental materials have been compiled separately and are available in print and electronic formats through the State Library Division.



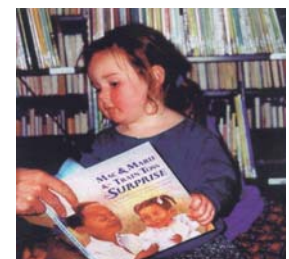
UTAH'S PUBLIC LIBRARIES: A PROFILE

Utah has more than a hundred public libraries. Forty-six local governments (cities and counties) provide library services to their residents through a single, independent community library. Salt Lake City and nine counties (Davis, Emery, Salt Lake, San Juan, Summit, Tooele, Uintah, Washington, and Weber) have multi-branch library systems that serve patrons through 53 branch facilities. Thirteen bookmobile libraries (each consisting of a mobile unit and a fixed facility) deliver library services within 22 of the state's rural counties. Eleven of the 13 fixed bookmobile facilities offer public access to the collections and the Internet. In addition, the State Library Division operates a central library that provides direct services to blind and visually and physically impaired patrons. *All told, there are 107 public library buildings within the state.*

THE MISSIONS OF OUR PUBLIC LIBRARIES

The 21st century public library is much more than a storehouse of books and information materials. Most of Utah's public libraries have an eight-fold mission to provide

- ❖ programs to encourage young children to develop an interest in reading and learning.
- ❖ assistance to help students of all ages meet their educational goals.
- ❖ sustained learning programs and outreach programs for special groups such as the elderly, the disabled, and the Spanish-speaking.
- ❖ high-demand, high interest popular materials in a variety of formats for persons of all ages.
- ❖ resources for life-long learning, in-depth research, and study.
- ❖ current information about community organizations, issues, and services.
- ❖ a focal point for community activities, meetings, and services.
- ❖ general reference information to meet community needs.





To support their missions and address the specific needs and desires of the communities they serve, Utah's public libraries offer a wide variety of programs, services, and activities for residents of all ages, interests, and abilities. They offer patrons access to information technology and electronic resources. Many maintain special collections and support special programs devoted to the history and culture of the local community.

OTHER USES OF UTAH'S PUBLIC LIBRARIES

As extensive as the programs sponsored by Utah's public libraries are, they represent only a fraction of the activities that occur at public library facilities. The state's public libraries also host an array of programs and events sponsored by local individuals, groups, and organizations. In most communities, library space is heavily used for scheduled events. The roster of groups that rely on local libraries for meeting space lists virtually every organization in the state, including scouting programs, seniors' groups, literacy programs, service organizations, arts programs, community councils, and educational entities. In smaller communities, the library may be the only public meeting space available to all at no charge.

DEMAND FOR LIBRARY SERVICES

Utahns use their public libraries heavily, and a number of factors suggest that the demand for library services will grow significantly over the next ten years:

- ❖ General statewide *population growth* projections anticipate both rapid overall growth and increases in key subgroups of library users, such as school-age children.
- ❖ As the state grows, *changing community expectations* are generating demands for new or expanded services in many library districts.
- ❖ *Computer access draws new users to the libraries.* When these newcomers become





aware of all the library offers, many begin to use other services as well.

- ❖ Utahns are visiting their public libraries more often, and projections suggest that *visits per capita will continue to increase over the next twenty years.*
- ❖ After decades of limited funding, the holdings, facilities, and services available in many public libraries are not adequate to meet community interest and expectations. *Libraries that have had the funding to meet these needs in recent years have experienced dramatic – and sustained – increases in usage.* When the new Tooele City Library opened, for example, circulation immediately tripled.
- ❖ Residents want to participate in community activities offered by the public libraries and to *use library space for community activities.*



PUBLIC EXPECTATIONS & SUPPORT

The public opinion survey conducted as part of this study revealed *widespread public support for libraries, interest in increased services, and concern about the current condition of our libraries.*

Most residents surveyed (82%) believe that *public libraries should have a high priority* (5-7, on a scale of 1 to 7) *among the services provided by local government.*

Utahns *visit their libraries often* and expect that they will continue to do so. More than half of the households surveyed visited their public library at least monthly: 62% on the Wasatch Front, 56% in growing communities, and 49% in rural communities.

Thirty percent expect that the community will need its public libraries as much in the future, and 60% anticipate that they may need their libraries more. The majority (62%) believe that increasing Internet access will either increase, or at a minimum not decrease, the need for public library services.

Dear All,
I've been meaning to write this for the past three years; finally I'm doing it. I really want to say a HUGE THANKS for the excellent job you do. I have felt very welcome, probably since you treat me as a friend and not just a Patron. You also do such an excellent job with Story time & Summer reading program. Thanks for the fun prizes etc. & especially the time put into everything. You do such a great job go feel your boss you deserve a substantial raise! Thanks again, Gary Beebe, Anika, Nathan, Caitlin & Aaron Jensen



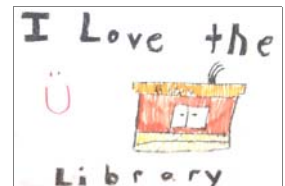


Those who do not have personal computers at home and those with lower incomes who rely on public libraries for access to information technology are most likely to recognize that the need for public libraries will increase.

When asked what discourages them from using public libraries, people most often responded by identifying library limitations in holdings, hours of operation, and facilities. Nearly all (90%) consider it important to have public library buildings that meet today's standards for safety, accessibility, technology, and library services (ranking of 4-7 on a scale of 1-7), and 40% considered this an issue of the highest importance (7).

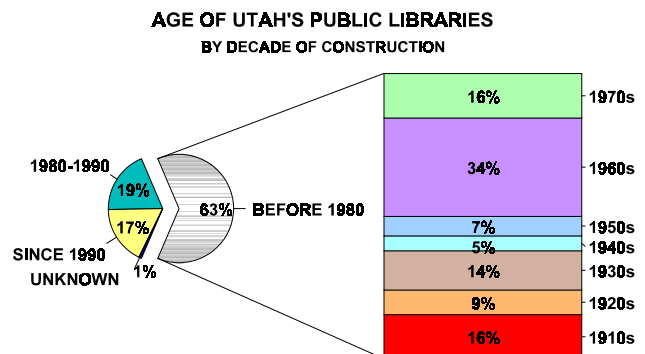
When told that the state provides less than 2% of the total operating funds for ongoing public library services and no funds for library construction, half were surprised to learn that funding was that low, and the majority stated that they thought this level of support was probably or definitely too low.

When asked if the state should provide additional funding to help communities improve existing library buildings or build new ones, nearly three-fourths of the respondents said that the legislature should definitely (43%) or probably (28%) allocate funds.



THE AGE OF UTAH'S LIBRARY BUILDINGS

The majority of Utah's public library buildings are aging: 63% were constructed before 1980, and 19% were constructed between 1980 and 1990. By 2010, 82% of the state's existing library facilities will be at least 20 years old. While many of these facilities have undergone renovation in the interim, only a handful have been completely renovated to comply fully with current codes and standards.





THE PHYSICAL CONDITION OF UTAH'S PUBLIC LIBRARY BUILDINGS

Utah's public library buildings face major challenges in providing services today. Most older facilities show a variety of signs of age-related failure and limitations.

- ❖ *Few were designed to meet the needs of 21st century information technology.* They do not have the wiring or, in many cases, the capacity to add enough wiring, to support current loads and meet current patron and staff needs. Librarians report that they have new computers, or funds available to purchase them, that they cannot use because they do not have the power to run the equipment or the space to house it.
- ❖ *Many of those constructed prior to the mid-1980s do not meet the standards established by current structural, mechanical, electrical, seismic, environmental, and life-safety codes.*
- ❖ A significant number were either not originally designed as libraries or were designed so long ago that they are *not configured or sized to meet the functional needs of today's public library.* As a result, the community pays an ongoing premium to support and staff space that cannot be used efficiently for library purposes.
- ❖ To meet patron needs, many *librarians have sacrificed professional work space, storage space, and meeting areas to create additional space for collections and reader seating.*
- ❖ Many of the older buildings are *not energy efficient*, requiring an ongoing premium in operating costs.
- ❖ Because of the shortage of funds, some communities have had to *defer routine maintenance and replacement*, and once-minor facilities problems have now grown to threaten the integrity of the buildings.



Accessibility problems



Unbraced shelving



Storage risks



Site hazards



Deferred maintenance



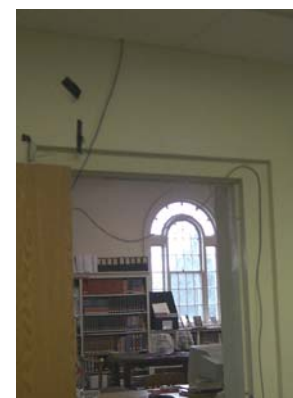
Surface deterioration



Leaks



Water damage



Lack of electrical capacity



Storage in equipment rooms



- ❖ Some older libraries offer only *limited accessibility*; others have none.
- ❖ *Security is often inadequate* to protect patrons, staff, and collections.
- ❖ A significant number have *outdated heating and cooling systems* that do not comply with current codes, provide adequately for patron comfort, or create an appropriate environment for collections.
- ❖ *Poor lighting* and inefficient, outdated fixtures are common.
- ❖ A variety of conditions, some of which present clear violations of code, threaten library patrons. Older buildings may contain *hazardous materials* such as asbestos, lead paint, and PCBs. Many probably have *plain, rather than tempered or safety, glass in locations that pose a risk of injury to patrons*. Some *lack sufficient exits*. Many have *unbraced, unanchored shelving*. Many smaller libraries do not have *smoke detectors*; in smaller libraries, life safety “protection” may consist of a single fire extinguisher. Most have a host of lesser code violations: *incorrect mounting heights, protruding signage, uninsulated pipes below sinks*, and the like. Steep stairs, ice dams, and broken pavement create *tripping hazards*.
- ❖ Others, though they may technically comply with code, would benefit from more attention to ensuring that large groups of children gathered for a library program would truly be able to exit safely in the event of an emergency.
- ❖ *Few libraries post rated occupancy*, and it is unlikely that many librarians are familiar with these code limitations, able to monitor them, or eager to enforce them if it means turning patrons away.



Energy inefficiency



Poor lighting



Obstructed electrical panels



Settlement and leaks



Asbestos and other environmental hazards



Capacity for library loads



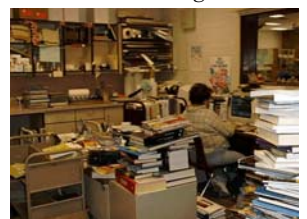
Tripping hazards



No seismic bracing



Exterior lighting



Inadequate work space



Security issues



Inadequate heating, cooling, and ventilation



CAPACITY TO MEET CURRENT NEEDS

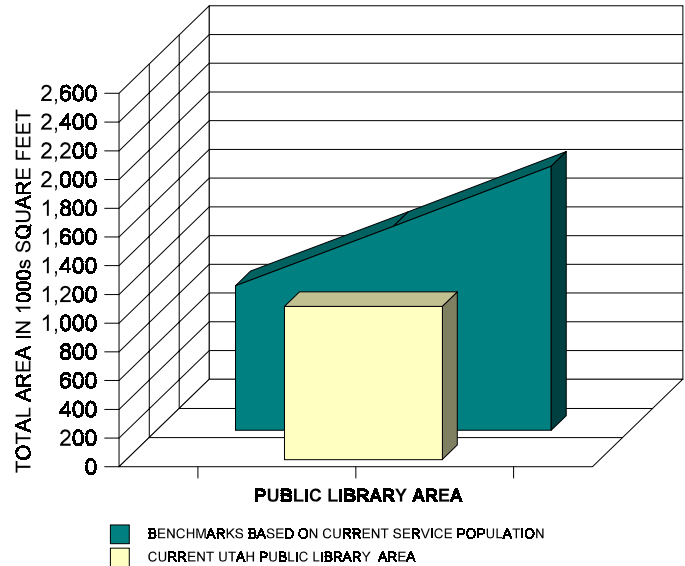
Utah's public libraries are, for the most part, *operating at or beyond their design capacity today*. Virtually all report that every available computer station is filled at peak periods, with patrons lined up *waiting for access*. Children's programs such as story hours and summer reading have grown so popular that many libraries run multiple sessions to meet the demand, and must still turn away some children. Although almost all librarians "weed" their collections heavily and regularly, the *shelves at most of our public libraries are filled to capacity*. Meeting rooms must be scheduled weeks or months in advance, if they are available at all.

To meet patron needs, many librarians have given up their offices, work areas, and storage space. The result is not only difficult working conditions for staff, but also life safety hazards. In many libraries, flammable materials are stored in mechanical rooms, under stairwells, and other areas prohibited by code. Donations and book sale items pile up in corridors and lobbies, blocking exit ways. *Hazards accumulate where buildings no longer provide any appropriate space for storing and processing library materials*, and it is unlikely that any amount of admonition will correct these conditions more than temporarily as long as adequate storage is not available.

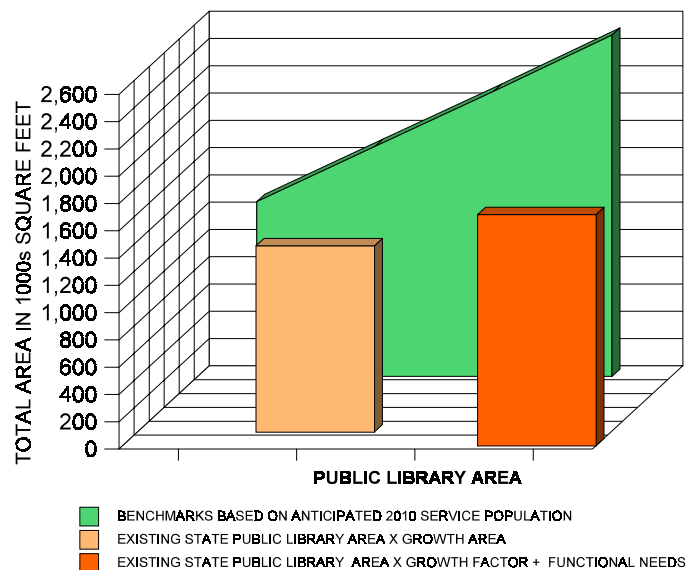
CAPACITY TO HANDLE GROWTH

Clearly, the many libraries that do not have adequate facilities to meet today's needs will not have the capacity to meet tomorrow's. But many more, though adequate to provide current levels of service for current patron use, will face these problems in the coming decade as the state's population increases.

CURRENT UTAH PUBLIC LIBRARY SPACE v. NATIONAL STANDARDS



UTAH PUBLIC LIBRARY NEEDS FOR 2010 v. NATIONAL STANDARDS





THE MAGNITUDE OF THE PROBLEM

Utah currently has approximately 1.1 million square feet of public library space.

- ❖ To provide an *equivalent level of service* for the projected population in 2010, Utah's communities will need *an additional 300,000 square feet* of public library space
- ❖ To *remedy current deficiencies and support new or expanded programming* would require *an additional 350,000 square feet* of new library space.
- ❖ In addition, many communities need to renovate or replace existing facilities that do not provide safe and usable conditions.

THE COST OF ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM

Early in this study, it became apparent that the real cost of addressing the needs of each of Utah's 107 public libraries would depend on a range of local decisions that cannot be determined by this study or by the State Library Division. Rather than provide a single arbitrary figure for each library, this study shows the range of potential costs.

- ❖ **Minor Renovation:** the potential costs for remodeling existing library space without undertaking major structural or mechanical system upgrades or addressing special conditions such as the preservation of a historic facility. *Providing minor renovations for all Utah public libraries would generate a construction cost of \$66 to \$88 million.*
- ❖ **Major Renovation:** the potential costs for completely upgrading existing facilities to comply with current codes, standards, and seismic requirements, including, where appropriate, restoration of significant historic buildings. *Providing major renovation would cost \$110 to \$220 million.*

- ❖ **New Construction to Meet Growth Needs:** additional space to provide the current level of services for the anticipated population in 2010. *Meeting growth needs will cost \$37 to \$41 million.*
- ❖ **New Construction to Meet Functional Needs:** additional space to remedy current space deficiencies and to support new or expanded programs and services. *To remedy current deficiencies and support new programming, Utah's libraries could spend an additional \$42 to \$45 million.*
- ❖ **Replacement of Outdated Facilities:** potential cost to replace the existing area and add the space required to meet functional and growth needs. *Completely replacing Utah's existing public library space would cost \$206 to \$224 million.*
- ❖ **Replacement of Facilities with New Libraries Designed to Meet National Benchmarks:** Construction of new space to provide Utah's communities with public libraries that meet national standards for the size of service population and the type of program needs identified by librarians. *Building new libraries for all of Utah's communities would cost \$301 to \$327 million.*

These figures, all in 2001 dollars, do not include planning costs, testing, fees, furnishings and equipment, moving costs, or unusual conditions.

THE PROBLEM IN CONTEXT

If all of the needs identified in this study were met, in 2010 Utah would have 1.7 million square feet of library space worth as much as \$327 million. While these may seem like staggering figures, they are modest in the context of general library standards. As the charts on page 8 show, Utah's current library space falls below the lowest national benchmark level. If Utah's communities all built new libraries to meet the growth and functional needs identified in this study, the state's library space would still rank at below the median for libraries serving a comparable population with similar holdings and services.



LIBRARY GOVERNANCE AND FUNDING

Governance and funding structures have a critical role in defining a public library's ability to respond to changing community needs, provide services to support its mission, and construct and maintain adequate facilities.

Public libraries, in Utah and across the nation, are typically governed by a library board that is appointed by, and accountable to, the local government entity. A small minority (6% nationally) choose board members by election.

Utah communities vary widely in the degree of autonomy that they grant to library boards. *Most library boards currently have little or no authority over fiscal matters. State statutes allow counties and cities to delegate discretionary administration of library funds to library boards but withhold the power to levy and collect taxes and issue bonds.* A few jurisdictions, such as Salt Lake City, have delegated authority for fiscal administration, but most have withheld it.

Several approaches might be taken to give public library boards greater ability to meet their operating and capital needs. Making city and county governments aware that they have the power to delegate fiscal administration to their library boards would be a simple and practical approach. More comprehensive change might be achieved if the legislature were to amend the statute to grant the power of fiscal administration directly to library boards, as Colorado does. The legislature might also amend the statutes to give library boards complete power to tax and bond, as Indiana does, or limited power to do so with the approval of the electorate, as Michigan does.

The legislature could also consider a range of statutory options designed to increase library funding options. These include

- ❖ Allowing cities and counties to call elections to levy a local option sales tax for library support.
- ❖ Including library services within the impact fee statute.
- ❖ Allowing the electorate within a city or county to petition for a bond election for library purposes.
- ❖ Prioritizing Community Impact Fund Board lending for libraries outside the Wasatch Front.
- ❖ Increasing the statutory maximum mill levy for city and county public libraries.
- ❖ Creating special library taxing districts that might be administered either independently or in cooperation with existing city and county governments.
- ❖ Providing incentive funding to support local efforts.

Considering statutory change gives the state options to explore for the longer term. Determining what, if any, statutory changes Utah communities would support, however, will require time. The first six options may face opposition in many jurisdictions.

While our communities review their library governance, providing incentive funding for public library construction offers the most practical, and non-controversial, way to meet urgent needs immediately.



A CALL TO ACTION

Utah's public libraries have served the state well in the 20th century, but they are no longer adequate to meet the needs of the 21st. Many are housed in aging buildings that do not meet today's codes and standards, lack the capacity to support information technology, and are inefficient and costly to operate. Even those with comparatively new facilities lack adequate space to provide new services that communities increasingly demand or to meet the growth anticipated for the next ten years.

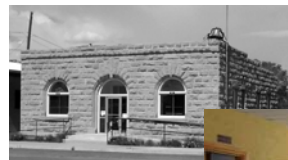
Many Utah communities—particularly those in rural areas – cannot address these needs without help.

Three times in history, a visionary effort has enabled Utah to provide public library resources for residents statewide: the enabling legislation for the territory provided funds for the first public library; the donations of Andrew Carnegie in the early twentieth century made it possible for more than twenty communities to construct public libraries; and the federal Library Services and Construction Act made matching funds available for construction of Utah public libraries from 1965 to 1974 and 1984 to 1997.

Today the state's residents look to similarly visionary public leaders and private donors who share Andrew Carnegie's recognition that "free public libraries" are "the most socially important structures that can be built" and "America's greatest contribution to western civilization."



Tooele City Public Library



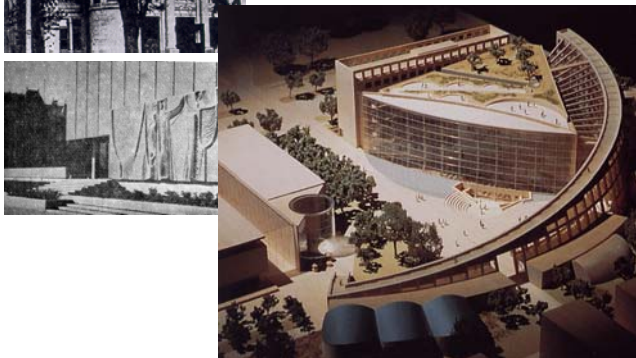
Minersville Public Library



Panguitch City / Garfield County Public Library



Salt Lake City Public Library, Main Library



American Fork City Library

